

CLAIMS:

What is claimed is:

1. A method for treating an autoimmune disease of the mouth, comprising topically contacting the mouth of a patient in need of such treatment with an effective amount of a purine analog or a pharmaceutical salt thereof.

2. The method of Claim 1, wherein said purine analog is a member selected from the group consisting of azathioprine, 6-mercaptopurine, and 6-thioguanine nucleotide.

3. The method of Claim 1, wherein said purine analog is azathioprine or a derivative thereof.

4. The method of Claim 1, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth includes a member selected from the group consisting of oral lichen planus, oral aphthous stomatitis, pemphigoid, pemphigus vulgaris, oral lupus, oral graft-versus-host disease, and lichenoid changes and aphthae associated with AIDS.

5. The method of Claim 1, wherein said azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof is in a solution or suspension at a concentration between 0.5 and 50 mg/ml.

6. The method of Claim 1, wherein said azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof is administered at a dosage between 50 and 250 mg/day.

7. The method of Claim 1, wherein said azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof is administered in a solution or a suspension.

✓8. The method of Claim 1, wherein said azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof is administered in the form of a member selected from the group consisting of a lozenge, a lollipop, a pellet, a cream, a gel, an ointment, a quick dissolving tablet, gum, or a mucosal adhesive.

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9.) The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of topically contacting includes rinsing the mouth of said patient with said effective amount of azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof for at least one minute; and swallowing said effective amount after said step of rinsing.

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10.) The method of Claim 1, wherein said step of topically contacting includes rinsing said mouth with said effective amount of azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof for at least one minute, and thereafter expectorating said azathioprine without swallowing.

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✓11. The method of Claim 1, further comprising systemically administering an effective amount of a member selected from the group consisting of a steroidal anti-inflammatory compound, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory compound, and an immunosuppressant.

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✓12. The method of Claim 1, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is oral lichen planus.

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✓13. The method of Claim 1, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is oral graft-versus-host disease.

✓14. The method of Claim 1, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is pemphigoid.

✓ 15. The method of Claim 1, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is pemphigus vulgaris.

✓ 16. The method of Claim 1, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is
5 oral lupus.

✓ 17. The method of Claim 1, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is oral aphthous stomatitis.

10 ✓ 18. The method of Claim 1, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is (lichenoid changes and aphthae associated with acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS)).

15 ✓ 19. A method for preventing an autoimmune disease of the mouth, comprising topically contacting the mouth of a patient in need of such treatment with an effective amount of a purine analog or a pharmaceutical salt thereof.

20 ✓ 20. The method of Claim 19, wherein said purine analog is a member selected from the group consisting of azathioprine, 6-mercaptopurine, and 6-thioguanine nucleotide.

25 ✓ 21. The method of Claim 19, wherein said purine analog is azathioprine or a derivative thereof.

✓ 22. The method of Claim 19, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth includes a member selected from the group consisting of oral lichen planus, oral aphthous stomatitis, pemphigoid, pemphigus vulgaris, oral lupus, oral graft-versus-host disease, and lichenoid changes and aphthae associated with AIDS.

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23. The method of Claim 19, wherein said azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof is in a solution or suspension at a concentration between 0.5 and 50 mg/ml.

5 ✓ 24. The method of Claim 19, wherein said azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof is administered at a dosage between 50 and 250 mg/day.

✓ 25. The method of Claim 19, wherein said azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof is administered in a solution or a suspension.

10 ✓ 26. The method of Claim 19, wherein said azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof is administered in the form of a member selected from the group consisting of a lozenge, a lollipop, a pellet, a cream, a gel, an ointment, a quick dissolving tablet, gum, or a mucosal adhesive.

15 27. The method of Claim 19, wherein said step of topically contacting includes rinsing the mouth of said patient with said effective amount of azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof for at least one minute; and swallowing said effective amount after said step of rinsing.

20 28. The method of Claim 19, wherein said step of topically contacting includes rinsing said mouth with said effective amount of azathioprine or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof for at least one minute, and thereafter expectorating said azathioprine without swallowing.

25 ✓ 29. The method of Claim 19, further comprising systemically administering an effective amount of a member selected from the group consisting of a steroidal anti-inflammatory compound, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory compound, and an immunosuppressant.

✓ 30. The method of Claim 19, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is oral lichen planus.

✓ 31. The method of Claim 19, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is oral graft-versus-host disease.

✓ 32. The method of Claim 19, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is pemphigoid.

✓ 33. The method of Claim 19, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is pemphigus vulgaris.

✓ 34. The method of Claim 19, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is oral lupus.

35. The method of Claim 19, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is oral aphthous stomatitis.

36. The method of Claim 19, wherein said autoimmune disease of the mouth is lichenoid changes and aphthae associated with acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS).